



National Marine Fisheries Service
Northwest Region
NEWS RELEASE

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Fisheries Service Announces Public Hearings

The National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) has scheduled community hearings to get public input on proposals to designate critical habitat for salmon and steelhead protected under the Endangered Species Act (ESA) and on a proposal to change the status of Umpqua River cutthroat trout.

Critical habitat are those areas where special management can correct problems and help restore conditions that bring back the species. Coho and steelhead mature in the ocean and need healthy streams and rivers to spawn and grow up in. Ocean conditions vary up and down based on climate while estuarine and freshwater conditions are greatly influenced by a whole suite of development activities.

Critical habitat is proposed for Oregon coast coho, and Upper Willamette, Snake River, Upper Columbia, Middle Columbia, Lower Columbia, Central Valley California, Central California Coast, South-Central California Coast, and Southern California steelhead. Because these same areas are also important to chinook, chum, and sockeye salmon, and cutthroat trout, critical habitat designation will benefit these species too. Information on proposed critical habitat for Oregon Coast coho salmon can be found in the *Federal Register* (Vol. 64, No. 89, May 10, 1999, page 24998) and at the NMFS Northwest Region website at www.nwr.noaa.gov. Information on proposed critical habitat for the nine different groups of steelhead is accessible in the *Federal Register* (Vol. 64, No.24, February 5, 1999, page 5740) and at the same NMFS website.

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Based on new scientific information, NMFS is also proposing that Umpqua River cutthroat change from endangered to candidate status. Information on the proposed change in status of Umpqua River cutthroat trout is accessible in the *Federal Register* (Vol. 64, No. 64, April 5, 1999, page 16397) and at the same NMFS website.

Public hearings will run from 6:30 p.m. to 9 p.m. at the following locations:

1. May 24, Tillamook County Courthouse, Commissioners Conference room, 201 Laurel Ave., Tillamook, Oregon
2. May 25, Umpqua Discovery Center, 409 Riverfront Way, Reedsport, Oregon
3. May 26, Douglas County Courthouse, Room 216, 1036 SE Douglas Ave., Roseburg, Oregon
4. May 27, Eugene City Hall, Council Chambers, 777 Pearl St., Eugene, Oregon
5. June 1, Chelan Center, 317 East Johnson, Chelan, Washington
6. June 2, Yakima County Courthouse, Room 420, 128 North 2nd St., Yakima, Washington
7. June 3, Lewiston Community Center, 1424 Main St., Lewiston, Idaho
8. June 4, Natural Resource Center, Bureau of Land Management, 1387 South Binnell Way, Boise, Idaho
9. June 7, Metro Regional Center, Council Chambers, 600 NE Grand Ave., Portland, Oregon
10. June 10, Wasco County Courthouse, Courtroom 301, 511 Washington St., The Dalles, Oregon

NMFS is soliciting specific information, comments, data, and/or recommendations on any aspect of these proposals. There will be opportunities to give oral and written testimony at the public hearings. Those unable to attend are encouraged to send comments to the address below. The agency will consider all information, comments, and recommendations received before it reaches final decisions on these proposals.

Comments on the steelhead critical habitat proposal are due by July 5, and on coho critical habitat by July 9. Comments on the coastal cutthroat trout de-listing are due by July 6. Written comments on the proposed rules, and requests for reference materials, should be sent to Chief, Protected Resources Division, NMFS, 525 NE Oregon St., Suite 500, Portland, OR 97232-2737.